

NSC BRIEFING

8 November 1956

NEAR EAST SITUATION

- I. EGYPT: [] Egyptian sniping and British counter-fire still in progress at Port Said.
- A. Nasr's military situation--while poor for prolonged conventional operations--is not hopeless for semi-guerilla campaign--"street to street, house to house"--such as he has contemplated.
- B. Ground forces (not counting paramilitary, including 8 to 12 year old kids, who were big factor in prolonged Port Said fight) still number as high as 90,000, though weak in organization.
1. Major portion of armor still available: at least 3 armored groups (tanks, infantry and self-propelled artillery) remain despite Sinai losses.
- C. Egyptian air force inoperative.
1. Some planes--IL-28's, a few transports, and possibly some MIG's--have been sent to safety in Saudi Arabia and Syria.
- D. Egypt's navy inactive. One patrol vessel is safe in Saudi harbor. Status of units at Alexandria and Suez unknown.
- E. Egyptians buoyed up, at least temporarily, by Soviet "tough talk."
1. Sound trucks went round Alexandria streets 5 November announcing Soviet aid coming.

NSA review completed

- II. **Nasr will try to use combination of Soviet threats and cease-fire to better his bargaining position.**
- A. **Already signs that regime's earlier willingness to give US virtual carte blanche to save Egypt from French and British has diminished.**
 - B. **As of now, Soviet threats have regained USSR's serious losses of prestige--in Egypt and other Arab states--they suffered during first week of hostilities.**
 - C. **Local populations will probably attribute announcement to Anglo-French cease-fire to Soviet pressure.**
- III. **SUEZ CANAL: Anglo-French invasion forces apparently control canal from Port Said to Qantara (about 30 miles south--map).**
- A. **Technicians and equipment, accompanying invasion, will undertake opening of canal, but British Admiralty says it may take two to three months to restore operations.**
 - B. **Approaches to northern and southern entrances have been mined. Mines may also have been planted in the canal channel. Lighthouses and navigational aids have been destroyed or damaged.**
 - C. **At Port Said, Egyptians have sunk at least one large dredge--the canal company's best--as well as one salvage vessel and three floating cranes.**
 - 1. **Most of the canal's other floating salvage, dredging and maintenance equipment is reported to have been scuttled elsewhere along the canal.**

2. The abutments of Firdan Bridge (only highway crossing the canal, 40 mi. S of Port Said) have been blown into canal.
 3. Immediately south of Lake Timsah (above Ismailia) Egyptians have sunk an LST, loaded with rock ballast, leaving only 50 feet of clear channel.
 4. This LST prepared as a block ship, was attacked by British naval aircraft in hopes of sinking it outside the ship channel, but vessel didn't sink soon enough to keep Egyptians from partial success.
 5. At Southern end of canal, near Suez, at least one Egyptian Navy frigate and one fishing boat (undetermined size) have been sunk across channel.
- D. The Egyptians are in easy position to hit "sweet water" canal, which supplies all fresh water to Port Said and canal zone, and starts in Cairo area.

IV. JORDAN AND SYRIA:

- A. [REDACTED] it is clear that Jordan's civil authorities have no desire to start hostilities with Israel at this time.

- [REDACTED]
- B. Syrian civil authorities also anxious not to start war, though they fatalistically assert themselves bound to Egyptian wheel.

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D. Syrian politicians, despite desire for restraint, are unable to block local actions by Army's powerful figure, Sarraj, who favors immediate aid to Egypt.

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V.

A. Iraqis may hope to be residual heirs from partition of Jordan if Israelis attack--or Baghdad may be doing the least it feels it can get away with in way of gestures to support Arab unity.

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1. Nuri's known pro-British posture has already brought criticism.
2. [redacted] Iraqi army might not follow Nuri's orders, if he sought to protect British.

VII. SABOTAGE OF OIL INSTALLATIONS: Thusfar, sabotage has chiefly hit IPC facilities in Syria and Lebanon. (Map).

- A. On 3 November, one Syrian pumping station (T-2) was destroyed and two others (T-3 and T-4) seriously damaged. On 5 November, IPC pipelines near Tripoli, in Lebanon, were blown up. Earlier, a fire was reported at the terminal of one of the IPC lines at Baniyas, in Syria.
- B. IPC lines, carrying oil from Kirkuk, in Iraq, normally account for over two-thirds of the average 95,000 tons/day of Middle East oil piped to Mediterranean ports.
- C. [redacted] it may take 2 months to have these lines back in full operation, although pumping at a reduced rate can probably soon be resumed.

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- F. Only oil now arriving at Mediterranean via pipeline is through TAPLINE (some 27,000 tons/day). TAPLINE terminus, as precaution against sabotage, has stopped loading any tankers declaring for Britain and France.**
- G. Saudi Arabia has banned all oil shipments to Britain and France. A press report of 7 November states that operations at the Bahrain refinery are also being cut, as a result of Saudi stoppage of crude supplies (Saudi crude has accounted for about 86% of the Bahrain refinery throughout).**
- H. British indicated on 6 November that there was only four weeks' supply of crude in the United Kingdom,**

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and on 7 November ordered a 10-percent cut in domestic oil and gasoline consumption.

- I. French and West Germans are in similar positions and are also planning allocation measures.

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